

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- Sub 2
B1
1. A telephone system comprising:
a switching system for receiving a call from a calling party;
a voice mail box coupled to the switching system for receiving the call if a called party does not answer the call; and
a telephone for receiving the call from the calling party, the telephone being capable of screening the calling party when the calling party is coupled to the voice mailbox.
 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the telephone further includes first and second connections to the switching system, wherein in one of the first and second connections is utilized to provide a three-way call between the calling party, the called party and the voice mailbox.
 3. The system of claim 2 wherein the three-way called party can not hear the calling party during the three-way call.
 4. The system of claim 3 wherein the ^{called} calling party can through interaction with the telephone talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second connections and the voice mail box is dropped from the call.
 5. A method for voice mail screening comprising the steps of:

2 (a) receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mail box; and
3 (b) joining the called party, calling party and voice mailbox in a three-way
4 call via a connection from a telephone of the called party such that the calling party can screen
5 the calling party's message. *called*
→ not in spec

1 6. The method of claim 5 which includes the step of (c) preventing the calling
2 party from hearing the called party, calling party and voice mailbox.

1 7. The method of claim 6 which includes the step of dropping the voice mail box
2 from the three-way call by the telephone when the calling party speaks to the called party.

1 8. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for voice mail
2 screening, the program instructions for:

3 (a) receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mail box; and
4 (b) joining the called party, calling party and voice mailbox in a three-way
5 call via a connection from a telephone of the called party such that the calling party can screen
6 the calling party's message.

1 9. The computer readable medium of claim 8 which includes the step of (c)
2 preventing the calling party from hearing the called party, calling party and voice mail box.

1 10. The computer readable medium of claim 9 which includes the step of dropping

2 the voice mail box from the three-way call by the telephone when the calling party speaks to
3 the called party.

1 11. A telephone comprising:
2 a receiver for receiving a call from the calling party; and
3 a voice mail screening system within the telephone for allowing a called party
4 of hearing the calling party when the calling party is coupled to a voice mailbox.

1 12. The telephone of claim 11 wherein the telephone further includes first and
2 second connections to the switching system, wherein in one of the first and second connections
3 is utilized to provide a three-way call between the calling party, the called party and the voice
4 mailbox.

1 13. The telephone of claim 12 wherein the three-way called party can not hear the
2 calling party during the three-way call.

1 14. The telephone of claim 13 wherein the calling party can through interaction
2 with the telephone talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second
3 connections and the voice mail box is dropped from the call.